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AUTHOR Katz, Phyllis A.; Barrett, Marty
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ABSTRACT

Why some children become biased and the conditions behind such biases are explored in this paper. The focus is on developmental patterns associated with race and gender attitudes during the preschool period and the factors that predict bias. The study examined children who were six months old and followed them and their families (N=210) until the children reached age six. Half of the original sample were African American and half were Euro American. Results indicate that the race group of the child, together with associated differences in socialization experiences, were significant predictors of racial attitudes. White children showed more total bias, higher in-group favoritism scores, and exhibited developmental increases in bias over the preschool period. The developmental course of Black children's attitudes was more variable. Gender bias showed some parallels with racial bias. The child's gender group was a significant factor in determining young children's gender attitudes. Parental attitudes, although not directly influential, did affect children through practices such as room decor, toy choice, and same-sex models. (RJM)

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"Early Predictors of Children's Intergroup Attitudes"

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by

Phyllis A. Katz, Ph.D. & Marty Barrett, Ph.D.

Institute for Research on Social Problems

520 Pearl Street

Boulder, CO 80302

(303) 449-7782

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"Early Predictors of Children's Inter-Group Attitudes"

W.C. Fields said he had no prejudices because he hated all groups equally. The chances are that that was not true and he was more favorable to his own group -- so are children.

Before children enter school, many of them exhibit considerable bias towards others that are not in their "group." Even before they have a clear picture of how their ingroup is defined by society, many show favoritism towards those included and negative affect towards those who are not.

Children develop many types of intergroup attitudes. Two that are central during the preschool period, however, have to do with race and gender. Both types of learning can lead to bias. Of the two, racial bias (if continued) is particularly deleterious; strong gender bias, however, may also have later negative consequences (and we include findings on both so we can contrast them). Even though all children learn about these two social categories, not all of them develop biases. Why? What factors determine whether children will display or not display bias when they enter school?

For the past few years, we have been trying to understand the determinants of these patterns. The findings we're going to report today are based upon an unusual longitudinal study. We began the study when the children were six months of age and followed them and their families until they were six years old. Half of the original sample was African-American and half were Euro-American. The main questions we addressed were: (1) when and how do children learn about the social categories of race and gender, and (2) why do some children enter school with little bias and others with high bias levels.

Obviously, we are able to present only a few of our many findings today. The two aspects we'd like to focus on are: (1) the developmental patterns associated with race and gender attitudes during the preschool period, and (2) the factors that predict bias in both areas.

A. Sample & Procedures

We began this longitudinal study with 210 families who were Colorado residents and had a child approaching six months of age. Half of the sample was African-American and half Euro-American. By six years of age, our sample numbered 142. We oversampled two-parent families. The children were tested in their homes by same-race female testers at nine age points: 6, 9, 12, 18, 24, 30, 36, 60, and 72 months. In addition, at 9, 36, and 72 months, parents completed a comprehensive questionnaire about their attitudes, socialization practices, and demographic information. A great variety of children's developing skills and preferences were assessed over the course of the study. Children's responses can be categorized broadly into three general areas: cognitive, perceptual, and affective/preference. Cognitive tasks assessed included sorting on the basis of gender and race cues, labeling self and others with regard to race and gender; knowledge of gender and race terms and stereotypes; and level of race and gender constancy. Perceptual tasks included habituation to faces during infancy, and judgments of similarity to others at later ages. Affective tasks included toy preferences, friendship patterns, playmate choices from photos, and race and gender attitude assessments.

Parental data was obtained by questionnaire, interview, and observation. The observation task was administered when the child was 12 and 18 months. Parents were given a book with pictures of people that varied systematically by age, gender, and race. They were videotaped as they looked through the book with their child, and their behavior was coded. Additionally, we obtained data about parents' attitudes and child-

rearing practices, as well as what their child's social environment was like, such as: who were the people who came into their home; what degree of cross-race exposure did their children have; how much time did they spend watching TV (and what kinds of programs); and how frequently did the child attend daycare or preschool. We also rated how gender-stereotyped the child's room or sleeping area was. An attempt was made to have a broad range of socio-economic levels within both racial groups. On the Hollingshead SES scale, with a possible range of 1 to 5, the average family SES (we used the average of both parents) was 2.60 for the entire sample, 2.37 for the White households (range of 1-5) and 2.90 for the Black households (range of 1-5). Numbers between 2 and 3 on this scale are indicative of business managers, nurses, social workers, insurance agents, and shop managers jobs. Mean level of education differed somewhat for the two groups, with Black parents having on average completed high school, and White parents having some college.

B. Developmental Patterns of Race and Gender Attitude Development

1. RACE

We assessed racial attitudes at three, five, and six years of age. The Preschool Racial Attitudes Measure (or PRAM) was given at three, and the Katz-Zalk Projective Prejudice Test at five and six. Both measures ask the child to associate same- or other-race children (shown in pictures) with either positive or negative events. For example, one positive item reads: "These two boys are playing their guitars in the school talent show. Only one of them can win the contest. Which one will win?" A negative item reads: "The teacher is very angry with one of these girls because she's been bad all week. Who is the teacher angry with?" Each item is scored zero or one. A score of one is given for each association of a positive item with a same-race child, or a negative item with an other-race child. Thus, the highest bias score is 12, a score of 6 reflects no bias, (i.e., random choices) and a score of 0 indicates the strongest positive other-group bias. In

addition to the total scores, we also examined scores on the positive and the negative subscales separately. Higher scores on the positive items are indicative of "ingroup favoritism" -- positive feelings about others of the same race, whereas higher scores on the negative items represent "outgroup bias" -- negative feelings about members of the other race. Higher overall scores are indicative of racial bias -- a combination of favorable views of one's own race and negative views of those of the other race.

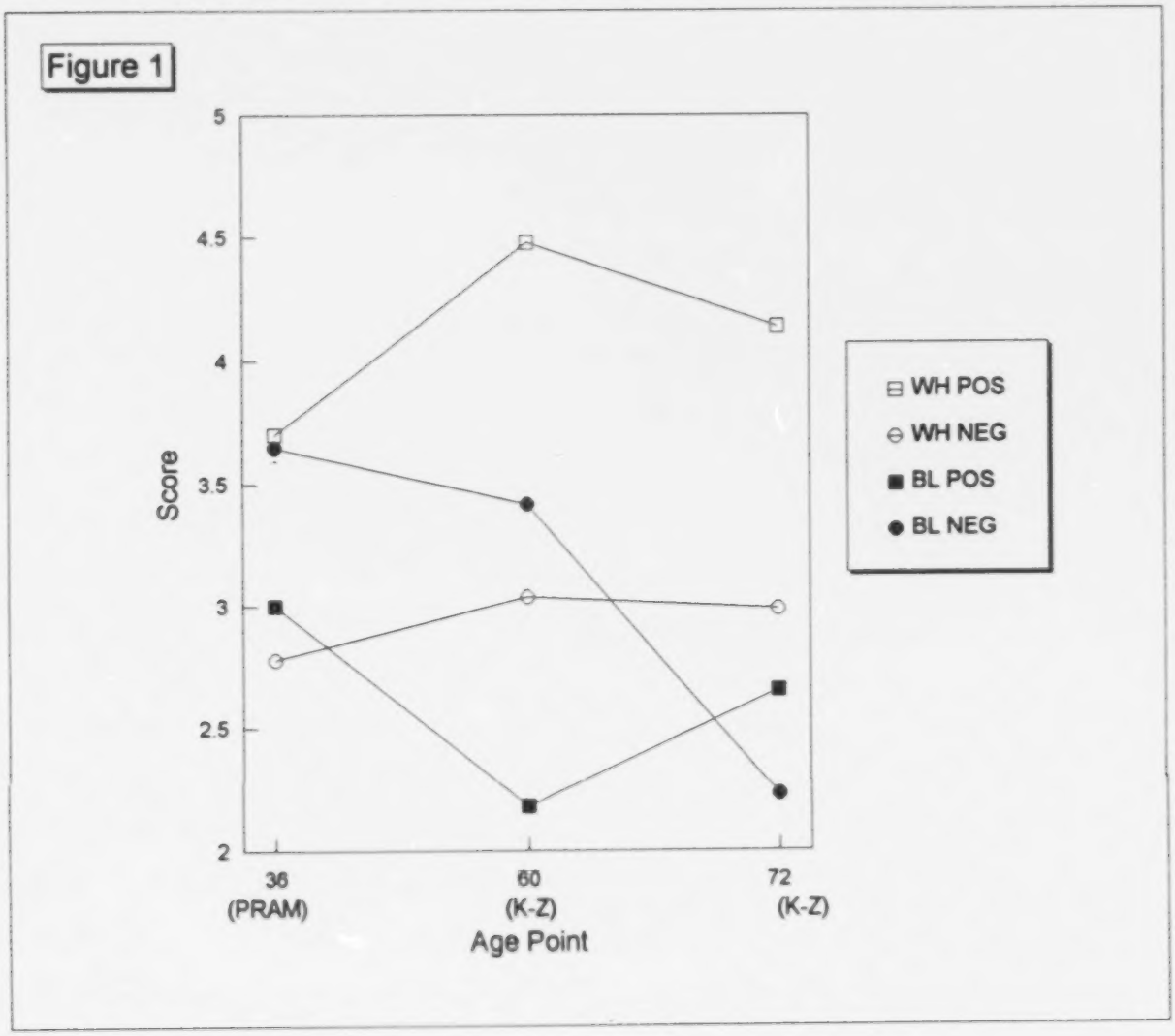
Figure 1 shows the results of these three age assessments. As you can see, at three years of age, there isn't a great deal of difference between the two race groups, although Whites have higher bias scores than Blacks at the later ages.

Developmental patterns of the two groups of children diverge widely after the age of three. At three, White children's ingroup favoritism scores are somewhat higher than their outgroup bias scores, but both types of scores increase between 3 and 5. For the Black children, outgroup bias scores at three are slightly higher than ingroup favoritism scores. In contrast to Whites, scores on both subscales drop from three to five. The drop in ingroup favoritism scores -- or pro-Black feelings -- is particularly dramatic. By six, Black children's evaluations of other Black children become somewhat more positive, and the degree of their negative feelings toward Whites drops substantially.

2. GENDER

How does the development of gender attitudes compare with this pattern? To assess this, we administered the gender-bias items from the Katz-Zalk at both five and six years of age. (Although the gender items from the PRAM were given at three, these weren't comparable because they measured stereotype knowledge rather than attitudes.) For the gender bias items, children were asked to associate either a boy or girl (both of the same race) with negative or positive adjectives or events. Scores were transformed so

Figure 1. **Means of Significant Age x Race Group x Subscale Interaction on Race Attitude Scores**



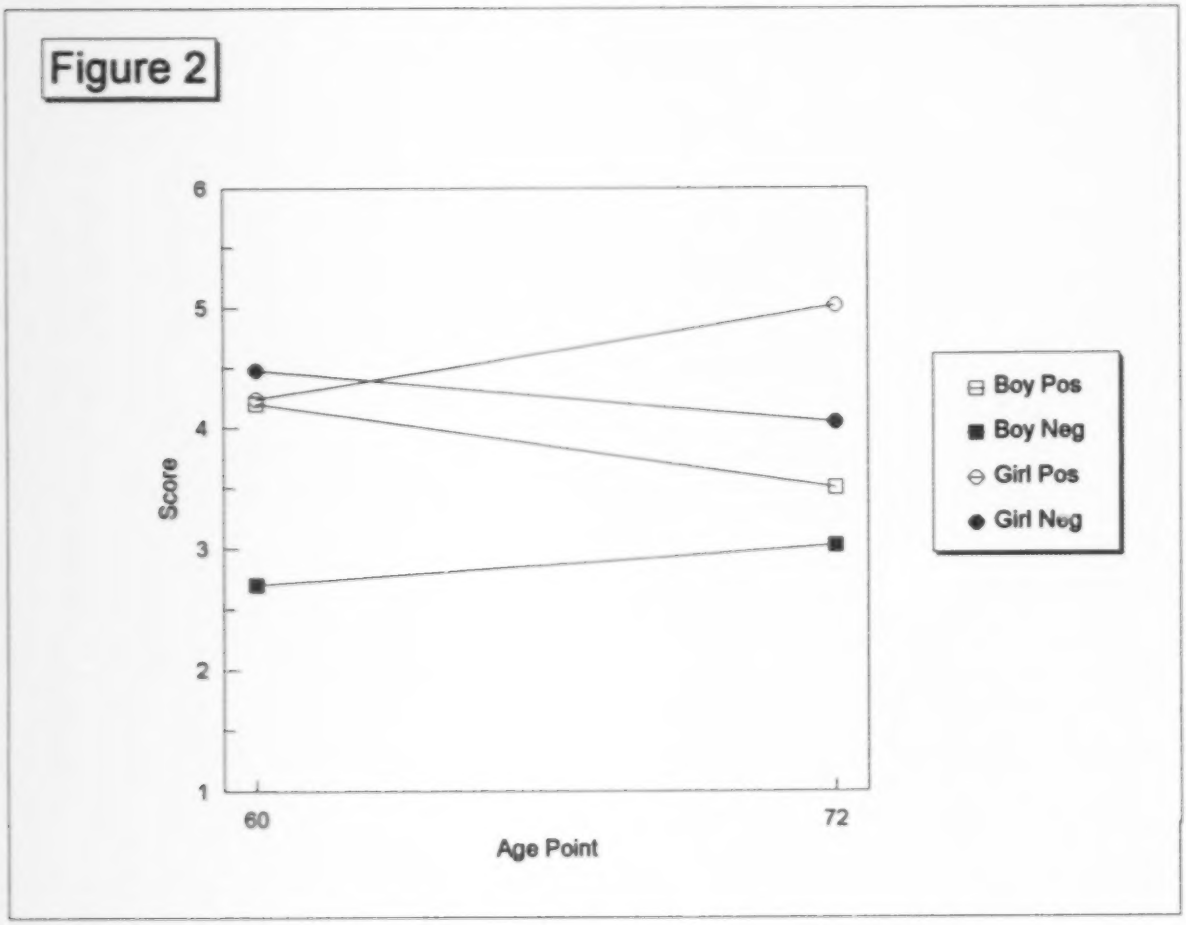
as to be comparable in scale to the racial attitude scores -- total scores ranged from zero to twelve (the most biased), and the ingroup favoritism and outgroup bias subscales ranged from zero to six.

Figure 2 shows the scores for the two age points. White children had higher gender bias scores than Blacks but the developmental patterns differed more by gender than by race, and in some cases race and gender interacted. At both ages, ingroup favoritism scores were higher than outgroup bias scores. There were a number of other significant main effects and interactions. Girls had higher bias scores than boys. In addition, the discrepancy between the ingroup favoritism and outgroup bias subscales was greater for Whites, and for boys (particularly White boys).

There were some developmental changes that varied for the different groups (not shown on Figure 2). Total gender bias scores remained constant for White girls, increased for White boys and Black girls, and decreased for Black boys. Moreover, each gender group showed different subscale patterns. Ingroup favoritism scores increased, and outgroup bias decreased with age for girls. We were hard pressed to find any girls who exhibited positive bias towards boys at these ages. Boys showed an opposite developmental pattern -- an increase in bias towards girls, and a decrease in same-group favoritism.

So, like the racial attitude data, there were marked and variable shifts in gender bias levels during the late preschool period. Different factors were associated with race and gender bias, as well as whether the bias was expressed as ingroup favoritism or outgroup prejudice. The developmental data suggests that both gender and racial attitudes are in transition at school entry, even though considerable bias exists. White children are more biased in both areas.

Figure 2. **Means of Significant Age x Gender x Subscale Interaction on Gender Attitude Scores**



C. Predictors of Intergroup Attitudes

1. RACE

What patterns of variables differentiate six year old children who are high in race bias from those who are not? In other words, what distinguishes biased children from unbiased ones? Are they more or less precocious? Are they reflecting their parents' attitudes? Were there certain early experiences that were particularly important?

Before these questions can be addressed, it should be noted that race group itself was one of the most important determinants of attitudes. The two race groups differed in a number of other respects, as well. There were demographic differences that might impact attitudes with regard to education level and SES (both were higher for Whites -- although as we noted previously, there was considerable variability within both groups). Black parents not only had lower race prejudice scores but believed that exposure to racial diversity was more important than did White parents. Black parents also expressed more traditional gender-role attitudes. They granted their preschoolers less independence than White parents, and held higher future expectations for their children.

Since parents differed, the children, not surprisingly, also differed along a number of dimensions as well. Black children watched more television, they were more likely to attend daycare or nursery school, they showed earlier awareness of their own racial identity, they made more references to race, and they spent more time playing with same-race dolls during the first three years of life. White children, on the other hand, had more same-race friends, and exhibited earlier mastery of racial labeling and racial constancy. These latter findings with regard to labeling and constancy remained even when general cognitive competence scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (given at 3) were statistically controlled for.

What predicts racial bias at six besides race? There were a number of things. Some were predictive for the whole sample, whereas others were specific to each group and/or type of score. Table 1 presents a complex picture. With regard to total scores, higher racial bias scores were associated with a number of factors in each area (summarized in Table 1). In the perceptual are, biased children showed weaker dishabituation responses to race cues at six months of age, that is, their responses to a race change were not as pronounced. In the cognitive realm, biased children exhibited earlier mastery of self-labeling. On affect/preference measures, biased six-year old children showed evidence of earlier bias; they had higher ingroup favoritism scores at three, higher racial bias at five, and they also had more same-race friends. On environmental/socialization variables, biased children had more racially homogeneous social environments and, surprisingly, watched less television than less biased children. Parents of children with greater racial bias permitted their children more independence, had lower future expectations, and were less gender-stereotyped in their attitudes. These parents had also spent more time looking and talking about pictures with their child on the picture book task at 12 and 18 months of age.

Some predictors were unique to each racial group. Black children with higher total racial bias scores played more with other-race dolls at twelve and eighteen months than those with lower bias scores. They also had lighter skin color. For White children, higher total racial bias scores were associated with lower levels of fathers' education. Parents of White biased children spent more time talking about same race pictures than did parents of White children with lower levels of bias, suggesting that race may have been more salient for these families.

There were more significant predictors of ingroup favoritism than there were of outgroup bias. Better educated, higher SES mothers had children who showed more

Table 1: Summary of Significant Predictors and Correlates of Racial Attitudes at Six

Category of Task	Bias Score Combined	White	Black
Cognitive			
Mastery in Race Labeling of Self	.33		
Makes Self Race Reference at 6		.28[2]	
Aware of Racial Differences at 5			.26[1]
Aware of Racial Differences at 5			-.23[2]
Perceptual and Appearance			
Dishabituation to Race at 6-months	-.20		
Skin Color (Blacks Subjects Only)			-.27
Preferences			
PRAM In-Group Favorability at 3	.17		
Katz-Zalk In-Group Favorability at 5		.22[2]	-.25[2]
Katz-Zalk Total Score at 5	.34		.28
Time with Other-Race Dolls at 12 & 18 Months			.71
Same-Race Best Friend (3-6)	.27		
Parental and Socialization Measures			
Dad's Education		-.28	
Mom's Education	.27[1]		-.23[2]
Mom's SES	.20		.29
Supportive of Child's Independence	.20		
Have High Expectations For Child	-.21		
Gender Stereotyped Attitudes	-.17		
Favor Racial Diversity	-.21[1]		
Believe Important to Discuss Race with Child		-.27[1]	
Time Looking at Same Race Photos with Child	.38	.35	
Time Looking at Other Race Photos with Child	.27		
Environmental			
Average Amount of TV (3-6)	-.20		
Amount of Race Exposure	-.25		

Note: No Superscript Indicates Total Bias Score
Superscript of 1 Indicates Ingroup Favoritism Score
Superscript of 2 Indicates Outgroup Bias Score

ingroup favoritism. Children with high ingroup favoritism scores also had parents who were negative about racial diversity. For Whites, high ingroup favoritism was associated with parental beliefs that it was not important to talk about race. Black children with higher ingroup favoritism were more apt to speak about noticing racial differences than did Black children with lower scores.

With regard to the outgroup bias scores, there were no common predictors for the two groups. Black children with high levels of negative outgroup bias had less educated mothers, made fewer earlier verbal references to race differences, and had lower earlier ingroup favoritism than did Black children with lower outgroup bias scores. White children with high outgroup bias scores at 6 made more self-race references and had previously exhibited high levels of ingroup favoritism.

2. GENDER

Before discussing our findings relating to the prediction of gender bias, we note that there were a number of analogies to race. Gender itself was both a significant predictor of gender attitudes, and a category associated with many socialization differences. The parents in our sample had higher expectations and were more autocratic towards their sons than their daughters. They were more likely to discourage cross-sex behaviors with boys, but held stronger stereotypic expectations for girls. Finally, on the picture book task, parents of sons focused more on same-sex pictures than did parents of daughters. There were several other gender differences that might have had impact on later attitudes. Boys spent more time watching television, their rooms were more gender-stereotyped at 5, and they had more exposure to other races than girls did.

With regard to cognitive variables, girls were more precocious, demonstrating earlier labeling and sorting skills with regard to gender than boys. Girls also exhibited

earlier knowledge of gender-stereotyped behaviors. Boys caught up at later ages on same-sex stereotype knowledge, but at 6, girls' knowledge of stereotyped behaviors associated with the other sex was still better than boys.

On preference tasks, girls spent more time playing with other-sex dolls at early ages, yet also showed stronger same-sex toy preferences. This changed at six, when boys began to report stronger same-sex preferences than the girls did.

As with racial attitudes, there were a number of predictors of gender bias, and these are summarized in Table 2. Note that very few predictors of gender bias were the same as for race bias. Higher levels of overall gender bias were associated with higher levels of fathers' education, higher levels of mothers' SES, and more prejudiced race attitudes on the part of both parents. Each of these factors predicted gender bias levels in boys more strongly than in girls. Children with high gender bias were more precocious. They mastered gender self-labeling earlier, had better early knowledge about gender stereotypes, and made more verbalizations about gender when looking at photos. They also showed stronger preferences for same sex toys and activities. Autocratic child-rearing practices were positively associated with gender bias in girls, but negatively associated in boys.

Many of the factors that were predictive of total bias scores were also associated with one or both subscales, but some factors were more specific. There were more predictors of ingroup favoritism scores than of outgroup bias. Higher gender ingroup favoritism scores were associated with having had less exposure to other races at earlier ages. For boys, higher ingroup favoritism scores were associated with less parental warmth, less television watching, and more gender-stereotyped rooms. Girls with high ingroup favoritism scores had parents who spent more time on same-sex pictures, relative to other-sex pictures.

Table 2: Summary of Significant Predictors and Correlates of Gender Attitudes at Six

	Bias Score		
Category of Task	Combined	Boys	Girls
Cognitive			
Mastery in Gender Labeling of Self	.34	.33	
Knowledge of Other-Gender Stereotypes	.24	.29[2]	-.26[2]
Gender Verbalizations Toward Photos	.17	.22	
Preference/Affect			
Same-Gender Toy Preference	.26	.35	
Same-Gender Favorite Activity	.31	.32	
Empathy Toward Opposite Gender		-.24[2]	-.28[2]
Parental and Socialization Measures			
Dad's Education	.21	.29	
Mom's SES	.18		
Race Stereotyped Attitudes	.22	.30	
Autocratic Behavior		-.35	.29
Warmth	-.21[1]	-.38[1]	
Time Looking at Same Gender Photos with Child			.38[1]
Environmental			
Average Amount of TV (3-6)	-.21[1]	-.23[1]	
Amount of Race Exposure	-.30[1]	-.26[1]	
Stereotyped Room		.27[1]	

Note: No Superscript Indicates Total Bias Score
Superscript of 1 Indicates Ingroup Favoritism Score
Superscript of 2 Indicates Outgroup Bias Score

Outgroup gender bias was associated with lower levels of empathy (and particularly, empathy for those of the opposite sex). Degree of stereotype knowledge predicted differentially for boys and girls. Earlier knowledge about other-sex stereotyped behaviors was positively associated with higher outgroup bias scores for boys, but correlated negatively with girls' outgroup bias scores.

CONCLUSION

What can we say about all of this? The prediction of negative race and gender attitudes in children is not a simple picture, but more like a complex mosaic puzzle. The development of such attitudes appears to be contingent on many subtle factors, which may operate differently for different groups of children.

The race group of the child, together with associated differences in socialization experiences, may be the most significant predictor of racial attitudes. White children showed more total bias, higher ingroup favoritism scores, and exhibited developmental increases in bias over the preschool period. The developmental course of Black children's attitudes were more variable.

People unfamiliar with the literature on children's racial attitudes generally assume that they are learned from the attitudes of their parents. This is not the case, at least in any directly measurable way. Others such as Aboud have also not found direct correlations. Yet, it is clear that certain early socialization experiences that are typically controlled by parents are quite relevant. Interestingly, some differences between high and low bias children were present at six months of age -- long before one expects socialization differences. Children with high levels of race bias paid less attention to racial cues during their first year of life (habituation). Parental practices and beliefs also played a role. High bias children had a more racially homogeneous social environment and their parents did not value racial diversity very much as .

Racially biased white children (who composed the preponderance of the high bias group), had parents who were less inclined to speak to them about race, but nevertheless, focused more upon same-race individuals when given a choice of pictures to talk about. There appear to be two potentially fortunate aspects to these race findings. The first is that children's attitudes are far from fixed at six. The second is that most of the environment predictors could be changed by parents if they were made aware of them and wanted to.

Gender bias shows some interesting parallels to race, even though the specific predictors and developmental patterns differ. Analogous to race, the child's gender group, together with its associated differential socialization experiences, may well be the most significant factor determining young children's gender attitudes. At the age levels we studied, it was the girls who were most biased, but we know from the research of others that this will change with age. Also analogous to race, parental attitudes did not affect children in a direct manner, but rather through practices such as room decor, toy choice, and focusing on same-sex models to talk about. Interestingly, there was one predictor common to both gender and race bias -- the type of social environment children were exposed to during the first few years of life. Children with low levels of race bias or gender bias had had exposure to a more racially varied group of children and adults during their first three years of life. This may be yet another powerful argument (if any more are needed) against residential segregation. Maybe Allport's contact hypothesis really is correct -- it just has to start at birth.

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